

Witton-le-Wear Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114067
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311470
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Robert Dingle
Headteacher	Mr Mark Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	St James Gardens Witton-le-Wear Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 0BG
Telephone number	01388 488350
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves an area that is average socially and economically. Pupils attend from a wide rural area. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage. The Gold Activemark and Healthy Schools Award are recent awards received by the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of Witton-le-Wear Primary School is good. It also has some outstanding features. The good leadership of the headteacher with assistance of a recently appointed deputy and the supportive and knowledgeable governors provide a firm steer to the school's work. Staff demonstrate an enthusiastic commitment to their work and their priority is to ensure that pupils achieve well. As a result, standards have risen in the past year and now reflect the consistently above average standards attained in previous years. Parents express their gratitude for the caring, safe and well managed school. They also appreciate and value the approachable staff and good progress that their children make.

The interpretation when comparing standards year on year needs to be treated with caution because of the small numbers in each year group. However, swift and effective action was taken to improve standards in writing following a fall in this aspect of the pupils' learning last year. Current standards in lessons are above that normally expected, although the improvements are not consistent in all pupils' written work. In the most recent unvalidated 2007 national tests, pupils exceeded their targets in English and mathematics. Standards are above average in Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. From a starting point in the Reception which is typical for their age, pupils make good progress throughout school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities make equally good progress because of the skilled contribution from teaching assistants. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy school, especially the priority given to physical fitness. The Gold Activemark award is an excellent testimony to this. Pupils understand the importance of excellent behaviour. Some pupils with previously challenging behaviour have really valued working with external specialists to address their needs. As a result, they understand they are models for other, younger pupils. The sense of responsibility pupils demonstrate is superb. Whether it is discussing plans in the school council or looking after pupils in the playground, they are a credit to the school.

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding teaching seen in lessons. Excellent features include clarity in demonstrations and explanations, high expectations and the ability to inspire pupils so they enjoy their work. Lessons are planned in detail and take account of the mixed-age classes well. However, expectations to write accurately are not always high enough, resulting in careless spelling, punctuation errors and some less well-presented handwriting. Marking is exemplary and provides ample guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, sometimes with targets so they know what to do next. The good curriculum is enriched with a wide range of after-school events and clubs. Good use is made of the talents of parents and pupils with clubs such as Japanese and chess adding to the usual range of sporting activities.

Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. Systems to ensure the care and safety of pupils in school and on trips are exemplary; they were aptly demonstrated during the inspection. There is an abundance of meticulously analysed assessment information to show how well pupils achieve year by year. The school knows this is complex and less efficient than a tracking system that would show information on individual pupils more clearly. The school has a good capacity to improve and has made good progress since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in all areas of learning. They enjoy school and the dedicated time they have as a group within their mixed-age class. Teaching is good and the children's needs are well met. The curriculum provides a good balance between indoor and outdoor learning because of the recently built, spacious, well-resourced outdoor area. Arrangements to ensure children's health and safety are comparable to the efficient systems throughout school. Links with parents are good as they are encouraged to visit school and share library books on a weekly basis. Assessment of the children's progress is detailed. The leadership for this area is fairly recently in place but is developing well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of writing across the curriculum so that it matches that in literacy lessons.
- Ensure systems to track the pupils' progress throughout the year are manageable and effective.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and by Year 6 standards are above average. Children start school in the Reception class with skills typical for their age, although they vary from year to year due to the small numbers in each age group. Children achieve well in all areas of learning and start Year 1 at levels above those usually found at this stage. The good progress made in the Foundation Stage continues throughout Years 1 and 2. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average. Sound progress continues in Years 3 and 4 and accelerates in Years 5 and 6 as a result of outstanding teaching. The current work and the school's assessment data show that standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, although they are not high enough in writing across the curriculum. The 2007 unvalidated test data shows a good improvement on the 2006 results, particularly in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make rapid progress; their needs are met well and they achieve well. Pupils who are more able also make good progress to reach their challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe and value the family ethos that pervades the school. Enjoyment is reflected in the above average attendance and the eagerness with which pupils come to school and take part in all it offers. Pupils work diligently and are keen to learn. Their attitudes are excellent. Buddies are responsible for looking out for all pupils at playtime. This gives an excellent sense of responsibility to those in the roles. Relationships at every level are exemplary. Pupils are proud they have such a large number of children joining the walking-to-school bus each day. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around school. Those pupils who may have had some behaviour issues in the past spoke frankly of the impact this had on other children and why they are now keen to set a good example. Pupils understand they need to eat healthily, even those who miss their chocolate bars in their packed lunches. They say that physical education, especially sports and playtime games, are their favourites because they help to keep them healthy. Pupils on the school council learn about financial management through their fund-raising efforts and the decisions they take

about priorities for their fund. Pupils' good basic skills, competence with information and communication technology (ICT) and effective personal and social development equip them extremely well for later life. Pupils speak with confidence and authority on matters linked to their school; they are excellent ambassadors. Pupils make an excellent impact on the local and wider community through regular fund-raising for others less fortunate than themselves and by singing and performances in the village.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good, some is outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning because they are encouraged to participate in lessons. Clear explanations and probing questioning checks that pupils understand what they have to do and, as a result, make good progress. Teaching assistants provide invaluable support, particularly to those pupils whose additional needs mean they benefit from working in a small group. Innovative resources are used effectively to create a calm and peaceful atmosphere enabling pupils to write with confidence. Steps to improve the teaching of writing to help raise standards are successful in planned writing lessons, leading to above average standards. However, the high expectations in those lessons are not consistently mirrored in other subjects, resulting in marked differences in spelling, presentation and the accurate use of punctuation. Information and communication technology is used to enrich learning in all classes. Marking is exemplary and provides a wealth of information so pupils know what to do to improve their work. Lessons are well planned and always take into account the mixed-age classes. There is an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, including those pupils who are more able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' personal development and well-being. Many opportunities are provided to promote a healthy lifestyle, including a very well supported walking bus scheme. Pupils say that their favourite activities are physical education and ICT. French, Japanese and chess clubs and sports coaching. African drumming provides additional enrichment at lunchtimes and after school. In partnership with other schools in the area, considerable use is made of the richness in the local environment to learn about, for example, the local river from source to the sea. Basic skills are given a good priority and effective arrangements are in place to involve parents in helping their children learn to read and to attend family learning which has had a recent focus on science. All pupils' needs are met well, including those with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities. The effective curriculum planning takes full account of the mixed-age classes. Pupils act responsibly and enjoy helping the youngest children in school. Involvement in an external project to help vulnerable pupils develop their self-esteem is leading to an increase in the confidence of all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' care is given a good priority. Actions to deal with minor accidents are efficient and systems to record this are good. Pupil absences are quickly followed up and, as a result, attendance is above average. Pupils say they are safe in school because of the care by their

teachers. The procedures for risk assessments are diligently followed on visits. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet requirements. Reviewing assessment arrangements to provide a more accessible system that tracks pupils' progress through school is a current priority.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management are reflected in the strong teamwork and the impact of actions to raise standards in the past year, despite considerable staff changes. The headteacher is well supported by a recently appointed deputy headteacher. Decisive action was taken to raise standards in writing following a fall in standards in 2006. The impact of these actions is good because standards rose last year and writing is improving. Targets were exceeded this year based on the unvalidated national assessment data. Future targets are challenging. Target-setting systems are in place, which although very complex, provide individual teachers with information on pupils' performance at the end of each year. Aspirations for the pupils are consistently good with priority given to achieving the higher levels in the national tests. Governors work hard to ensure that the school operates effectively within the constraints of its budget and give high priority to appointing a good calibre of new staff. They achieve good value for money. Self-evaluation involves all staff and the governors. It provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although rather modest in its evaluation of personal development and well-being. The actions taken by the school, reflected in the school improvement plan, are securely based on an analysis of the previous year's performance of pupils. The impact, for example, of the actions to improve writing is evident in the improvements to standards, although less so as yet on assessment systems. The school has a good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Witton-le-Wear Primary School, Durham, DL14 0BG

Thank you for making my visit to your school so enjoyable and for making me so welcome. It was a pleasure to hear so much about your school and to talk to some of you about the roles and responsibilities you have around school. You go to a good school. Some of its work is outstanding.

You all work hard, especially in Years 5 and 6, and reach above average standards in your work. Your behaviour is excellent and you care for each other very well - especially those of you who are buddies. You say you have many chances to keep fit and healthy and enjoy school because of the family atmosphere and the small classes. How exciting to be getting an environmental area. The plans you have drawn up for this are most impressive.

There are some things your school can do to make it even better. I hope you can help too by trying your best with all your writing, not just in your literacy lessons. The records kept showing how well you are making progress throughout school are very, very detailed. Your teachers are going to make these more straightforward.

I hope you enjoyed the Harvest Festival and sang your very best.

Good luck

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector